



One Hundred Fifteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

September 27, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our serious concerns regarding the inadequate Federal response to recent hurricanes that have devastated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Although we appreciate the challenges associated with fulfilling the Federal government's disaster response obligations outside the continental U.S., the residents of these territories are Americans and their government is failing them. What could have been an opportunity for you to show leadership is quickly becoming Katrina 2.0.

Nowhere are things more reminiscent of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath than Puerto Rico. Currently, nearly half of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million residents are without clean drinking water.¹ Eighty percent of Puerto Rico's electricity transmission lines were taken down² and the Mayor of San Juan has warned that all of Puerto Rico could be without power for up to six months.³ Without power, there is no air conditioning and no way to refrigerate critical medicines. Fuel shortages are threatening to render powerless the few hospitals with working generators.⁴ Cell phone towers are out, limiting communications. And, after decades of the Federal government mortgaging infrastructure investments, the Guajataca Dam, which had previously been deemed "high hazard" by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is releasing water and 70,000 nearby

¹ "Hurricane Maria: Trump Defends Puerto Rico Response," *BBC News* (Sept. 27, 2017), available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41405671>.

² Danica Coto and David Koenig, "Puerto Rico is in the Dark in the Wake of Hurricane Maria," *The Washington Post* (Sept. 25, 2017), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/puerto-rico-is-in-the-dark-in-wake-of-hurricane-maria/2017/09/25/28affc4c-a23a-11e7-b573-8ec86cdfef1ed_story.html?utm_term=.09ffd80f53b5.

³ Jessica Leigh Hester & Martin Echenique, "After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's Grid Needs a Complete Overhaul," *Wired* (Sept. 27, 2017), available at <https://www.wired.com/story/after-hurricane-maria-puerto-ricos-grid-needs-a-complete-overhaul/>.

⁴ Chandrika Narayan, "'Apocalyptic' Devastation in Puerto Rico, and Little Help in Sight," *CNN.com* (Sept. 26, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/25/us/hurricane-maria-puerto-rico/index.html> (last accessed Sept. 27, 2017).

residents have been ordered to evacuate.⁵ These are a just a few of the many critical problems that persist in Puerto Rico one week after Hurricane Maria made landfall. Clearly, they will not be resolved without robust support from the Federal government.

It is time to take a break from Twitter and focus on the issue at hand: saving the lives of Americans in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands need to know they have not been forgotten. We urge you to ensure that every available Federal resource is brought to bear to assist these U.S. territories. We also ask that you propose an interim supplemental relief package for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands before the end of the week. Finally, we urge you to establish a Rebuilding Task Force that will help the areas affected by this season's hurricanes build back stronger.

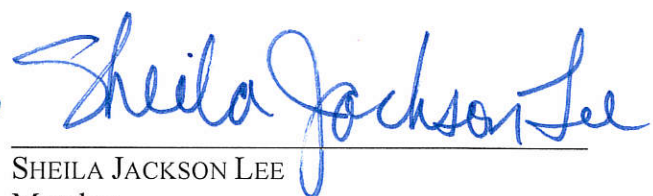
Mr. President, history will remember you for how you respond to the Americans suffering because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We urge you to prevent Katrina 2.0 and act now to address the immediate response challenges and begin to identify the resources necessary for recovery.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

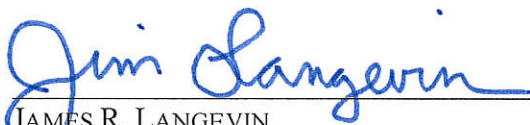
Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

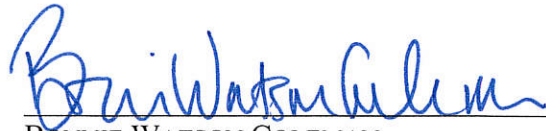
⁵ Chandrika Narayan, "'Apocalyptic' Devastation in Puerto Rico, and Little Help in Sight," *CNN.com* (Sept. 26, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/25/us/hurricane-maria-puerto-rico/index.html> (last accessed Sept. 27, 2017).



FILEMON VELA

Member

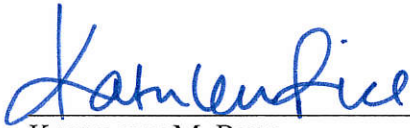
House Committee on Homeland Security



BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN

Member

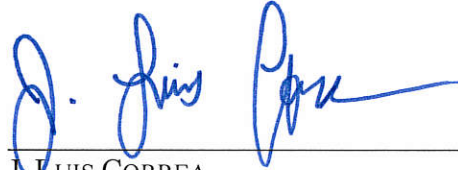
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Member

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